

"FIRST!"



A TALK WITH BOYS

BY HENRY DRUMMOND.
F.G.S.



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A TALK WITH BOYS

BY

HENRY DRUMMOND, F.G.S.

AUTHOR OF "GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD," ETC.

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This address was delivered in Glasgow,
at the City Hall, to the Members of the
Boys' Brigade, some fourteen hundred
boys being present. It is now published
in convenient form for the boys of America.

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INTRODUCTORY.



HORTLY after noon, one Sunday lately, it was evident to dwellers in the city of Glasgow that some event of importance was about to take place in connection with the Boys' Brigade.

Boy after boy, wearing the now familiar uniform of cap, belt, and haversack, was seen making his way to the private parade, where his Company was to fall in, preparatory to marching to the City Hall to take part in the Eastern District Church Parade.

No sooner were the doors opened than the Companies commenced to

enter, and were marched in file to their respective seats. At 2.10 every Company had arrived, and the scene, as viewed from the platform, was now a most impressive one, the entire area of the hall being filled by the boys, some fourteen hundred strong, who looked soldiers every inch as they sat in their smart uniform.

The galleries were crowded with an interested audience, and the platform was also filled, principally by a large choir. Five minutes before the hour the organist took his seat at the organ for the opening voluntary, and on the first note being touched the hum of voices was instantly hushed, and on a signal being given every cap was at once removed.

Punctually at 2.30 Professor Drummond stepped upon the platform, accompanied by several members of the Battalion Executive Committee.

Every boy was attention when Professor Drummond gave out the Hundredth Psalm; and, heartily as one has often heard the familiar words sung, it is questionable if ever it was rendered with greater effect.

The rustle of leaves which followed when the sixth chapter of S. Matthew was given out, indicated that the order for every boy to bring his Bible had not been overlooked. The hymn, "Jesus shall reign," was then sung with heartiness. When seats had been resumed the Professor raised his hand, and immediately every head was bowed, and the silence was most impressive as the prayer was offered. The next hymn, "Soldiers of Christ, arise!" being an evident favorite, was rendered with great vigor.

Professor Drummond then said: "The 47th Glasgow Company will

stand." Instantly a large Company in front rose. "The 11th Glasgow Company will also stand," and a Company near the back of the hall rose. These Companies were asked to turn to the chapter that had been read, the sixth of S. Matthew, and to read in unison the verse before the end : "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you.*" The Companies were told to sit down, and Professor Drummond proceeded with his address as follows :

“FIRST!” THE ADDRESS.



HAVE three heads to give you. The first is “Geography,” the second is “Arithmetic,” and the third is “Grammar.”

GEOGRAPHY.

First. Geography tells us where to find places. Where is the kingdom of God? It is said that when a Prussian officer was killed in the Franco-Prussian war, a map of France was very often found in his pocket. When we wish to occupy a

country, we ought to know its geography. Now, *where* is the kingdom of God? A boy over there says, "It is in heaven." No; it is not in heaven. Another boy says, "It is in the Bible." No; it is not in the Bible. Another boy says, "It must be in the Church." No; it is not in the Church. Heaven is only the *capital* of the kingdom of God; the Bible is the *Guide-book* to it; the Church is the weekly *Parade* of those who belong to it. If you would turn to the seventeenth chapter of S. Luke you will find out where the kingdom of God really is. "The kingdom of God is within you"—within *you*. The kingdom of God is *inside people*.

I remember once taking a walk by the river near where the Falls of Niagara are, and I noticed a remarkable figure walking along the river bank.

I had been some time in America. I had seen black men, and red men, and yellow men, and white men; black men, the Negroes; red men, the Indians; yellow men, the Chinese; white men, the Americans. But this man looked quite different in his dress from anything I had ever seen. When he came a little closer, I saw he was wearing a kilt; when he came a little nearer still, I saw that he was dressed exactly like a Highland soldier. When he came quite near, I said to him, "What are you doing here?" "Why should I not be here?" he said. "Don't you know this is British soil? When you cross the river you come into Canada." This soldier was thousands of miles from England, and yet he was in the kingdom of England. Wherever there is an English heart beating loyal to the Queen of Britain, there is

England. Wherever there is a boy whose heart is loyal to the King of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of God is within him.

What is the kingdom of God? Every kingdom has its exports, its products. Go down to the river here, and you will find ships coming in with cotton; you know they come from America. You will find ships with tea; you know they are from China. Ships with wool; you know they come from Australia. Ships with sugar; you know they come from Java. What comes from the kingdom of God? Again we must refer to our Guide-book. Turn to Romans, and we shall find what the kingdom of God is. I will read it: "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, joy"—three things. "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, joy." Righteousness,

of course, is just doing what is right. Any boy who does what is right has the kingdom of God within him. Any boy who, instead of being quarrelsome, lives at peace with the other boys, has the kingdom of God within him. Any boy whose heart is filled with joy because he does what is right, has the kingdom of God within him. The kingdom of God is not going to religious meetings, and hearing strange religious experiences : the kingdom of God is doing what is right — living at peace with all men, being filled with joy in the Holy Ghost.

Boys, if you are going to be Christians, be Christians as boys, and not as your grandmothers. A grandmother has to be a Christian as a grandmother, and that is the right and the beautiful thing for her ; but if you cannot read your Bible by the hour as your grandmother can, or

delight in meetings as she can, don't think you are necessarily a bad boy. When you are your grandmother's age you will have your grandmother's kind of religion. Meantime, be a Christian as a boy. Live a boy's life. Do the straight thing; seek the kingdom of righteousness and honor and truth. Keep the peace with the boys about you, and be filled with the joy of being a loyal, and simple, and natural, and boy-like servant of Christ.

You can very easily tell a house, or a workshop, or an office where the kingdom of God is *not*. The first thing you see in that place is that the "straight thing" is not always done. Customers do not get fair play. You are in danger of learning to cheat and to lie. Better, a thousand times, to starve than to stay in a place where you cannot do what is right.

Or, when you go into your workshop, you find everybody sulky, touchy, and ill-tempered ; everybody at daggers' drawn with everybody else ; some of the men not on speaking terms with some of the others, and the whole *feel* of the place miserable and unhappy. The kingdom of God is not there, for *it* is peace. It is the kingdom of the Devil that is anger and wrath and malice.

If you want to get the kingdom of God into your workshop, or into your home, let the quarrelling be stopped. Live in peace and harmony and brotherliness with everyone. For the kingdom of God is a kingdom of brothers. It is a great society, founded by Jesus Christ, of all the people who try to be like Him, and live to make the world better and sweeter and happier. Wher- ever a boy is trying to do that, in the

house or in the street, in the workshop or on the baseball field, there is the kingdom of God. And every boy, however small or obscure or poor, who is seeking that, is a member of it. You see now, I hope, what the kingdom is.

ARITHMETIC.

I pass, therefore, to the second head: What was it? "Arithmetic." Are there any arithmetic words in this text? "Added," says one boy. Quite right, *added*. What other arithmetic word? "First." Yes, *first*—"first," "added." Now, don't you think you could not have anything better to seek "first" than the things I have named—to do what is right, to live at peace, and be always making those about you happy? You see at once why Christ tells us

to seek these things first—because they are the best worth seeking. Do you know anything better than these three things, anything happier, purer, nobler? If you do, seek them first. But if you do not, seek first the kingdom of God. I am not here this afternoon to tell you to be religious. You know that. I am not here to tell you to seek the kingdom of God. I have come to tell you to seek the kingdom of God *first*. *First*. Not many people do that. They put a little religion into their life—once a week, perhaps. They might just as well let it alone. It is not worth seeking the kingdom of God unless we seek it *first*. Suppose you take the helm out of a ship and hang it over the bow, and send that ship to sea, will it ever reach the other side? Certainly not. It will drift about anyhow. Keep religion

in its place, and it will take you straight through life, and straight to your Father in heaven when life is over. But if you do not put it in its place, you may just as well have nothing to do with it. Religion out of its place in a human life is the most miserable thing in the world. There is nothing that requires so much to be kept in its place as religion, and its place is what? second? third? "First." Boys, carry that home with you to-day—*first* the kingdom of God. Make it so that it will be natural to you to think about that the very first thing.

There was a boy in Glasgow apprenticed to a gentleman who made telegraphs. The gentleman told me this himself. One day this boy was up on the top of a four-story house with a number of men fixing up a telegraph-wire. The work was all but

done. It was getting late, and the men said they were going away home, and the boy was to nip off the ends of the wire himself. Before going down they told him to be sure to go back to the workshop, when he was finished, with his master's tools. "Do not leave any of them lying about, whatever you do," said the foreman. The boy climbed up the pole and began to nip off the ends of the wire. It was a very cold winter night, and the dusk was gathering. He lost his hold and fell upon the slates, slid down, and then over and over to the ground below. A clothes-rope, stretched across the "green" on to which he was just about to fall, caught him on the chest and broke his fall; but the shock was terrible, and he lay unconscious among some clothes upon the green. An old woman came out; seeing her rope brok-

en and the clothes all soiled, thought the boy was drunk, shook him, scolded him, and went for the policeman. And the boy with the shaking came back to consciousness, rubbed his eyes, and got upon his feet. What do you think he did? He staggered, half blind, away up the stairs. He climbed the ladder. He got on to the roof of the house. He gathered up his tools, put them into his basket, took them down, and when he got to the ground again, fainted dead away. Just then the policeman came, saw there was something seriously wrong, and carried him away to the hospital, where he lay for some time. I am glad to say he got better. What was his first thought at that terrible moment? His duty. He was not thinking of himself; he was thinking about his master. First, the kingdom of God.

But there is another arithmetic word. What is it? "Added." There is not one boy here who does not know the difference between *addition* and *subtraction*. Now, that is a very important difference in religion, because—and it is a very strange thing—very few people know the difference when they begin to talk about religion. They often tell boys that if they seek the kingdom of God, everything else is going to be *subtracted* from them. They tell them that they are going to become gloomy, miserable, and will lose everything that makes a boy's life worth living—that they will have to stop baseball and story-books, and become little old men, and spend all their time in going to meetings and in singing hymns. Now, that is not true. Christ never said anything like that. Christ says we are to "Seek first the kingdom

of God," and everything else worth having is to be *added* unto us. If there is anything I would like you to take away with you this afternoon, it is these two arithmetic words—“first” and “added.” I do not mean by added that if you become religious you are all going to become rich. Here is a boy, who, in sweeping out the shop to-morrow morning, finds sixpence lying among the orange-boxes. Well, nobody has missed it. He puts it in his pocket, and it begins to burn a hole there. By breakfast-time he wishes that sixpence were in his master’s pocket. And by and by he goes to his master. He says (to *himself*, and not to his master), “I was at the Boys’ Brigade yesterday, and I was told to seek *first* that which was right.” Then he says to his master, “Please, sir, here is sixpence that I found upon the floor.” The

master puts it in the “till.” What has the boy got in his pocket? Nothing; *but he has got the kingdom of God in his heart.* He has laid up treasure in heaven, which is of infinitely more worth than sixpence. Now, that boy does not find a shilling on his way home. I have known that happen, but that is not what is meant by “adding.” It does not mean that God is going to pay him in his own coin, for He pays in better coin.

Yet I remember once hearing of a boy who was paid in both ways. He was very, very poor. He lived in a foreign country, and his mother said to him one day that he must go into the great city and start in business, and she took his coat and cut it open and sewed between the lining and the coat forty golden dinars, which she had saved up for many years to start him in life. She told him to

take care of robbers as he went across the desert ; and as he was going out of the door she said : " My boy, I have only two words for you — ' Fear God, and never tell a lie.' " The boy started off, and toward evening he saw glittering in the distance the minarets of the great city, but between the city and himself he saw a cloud of dust, it came nearer ; presently he saw that it was a band of robbers. One of the robbers left the rest and rode toward him, and said : " Boy, what have you got ? " And the boy looked him in the face and said : " I have forty golden dinars sewed up in my coat." And the robber laughed and wheeled round his horse and went away back. He would not believe the boy. Presently another robber came, and he said : " Boy, what have you got ? " " Forty golden dinars sewed up in

my coat." The robber said: "The boy is a fool," and wheeled his horse and rode away back. By and by the robber captain came, and he said: "Boy, what have you got?" "I have forty golden dinars sewed up in my coat." And the robber dismounted and put his hand over the boy's breast, felt something round, counted one, two, three, four, five, till he counted out the forty golden coins. He looked the boy in the face, and said: "Why did you tell me that?" The boy said: "Because of God and my mother." And the robber leaned on his spear and thought, and said: "Wait a moment." He mounted his horse, rode back to the rest of the robbers, and came back in about five minutes with his dress changed. This time he looked not like a robber, but like a merchant. He took the boy up on his horse and said:

" My boy, I have long wanted to do something for my God and for my mother, and I have this moment renounced my robber's life. I am also a merchant. I have a large business house in the city. I want you to come and live with me, to teach me about your God; and you will be rich, and your mother some day will come and live with us." And it all happened. By seeking first the kingdom of God, all these things were added unto him.

Boys, banish forever from your minds the idea that religion is *subtraction*. It does not tell us to give things up, but rather gives us something so much better than they give themselves up. When you see a boy on the street whipping a top, you know, perhaps, that you could not make that boy happier than by giving him a top, a whip, and half an

hour to whip it. But next birthday, when he looks back, he says, "What a goose I was last year to be delighted with a top ; what I want now is a baseball bat. Then when he becomes an old man he does not care in the least for a baseball bat, he wants rest, and a snug fireside, and a newspaper every day. He wonders how he could ever have taken up his thoughts with baseball bats and whipping-tops. Now, when a boy becomes a Christian, he grows out of the evil things one by one—that is to say, if they are really evil—which he used to set his heart upon (of course I do not mean baseball bats, for they are not evils) ; and so instead of telling people to give up things, we are safer to tell them to "Seek first the kingdom of God," and then they will get new things and better things, and the old things will drop off of them-

selves. This is what is meant by the "new heart." It means that God puts into us new thoughts and new wishes, and we become quite different boys.

GRAMMAR.

Lastly, and very shortly. What was the third head? "Grammar." Right: Grammar. Now, I require a clever boy to answer the next question. What is the verb? "Seek." Very good: "Seek." What mood is it in? "Imperative mood." What does that mean? "Command." You boys of the Boys' Brigade know what commands are. What is the soldier's first lesson? "Obedience." Have you obeyed this command? Remember the imperative mood of these words, "*Seek* first the kingdom of God." This is the command of your King. It *must* be done. I

have been trying to show you what a splendid thing it is ; what a reasonable thing it is ; what a happy thing it is ; but beyond all these reasons it is a thing that *must* be done, because we are *commanded* to do it by our Captain. It is one of the finest things about the Boys' Brigade that it always appeals to Christ as its highest Officer, and takes its commands from Him. Now, there is His command to seek *first* the kingdom of God. Have you done it? "Well," I know some boys will say, "we are going to have a good time, enjoy life, and then we are going to seek—*last*—the kingdom of God." Now that is mean ; it is nothing else than mean for a boy to take all the good gifts that God has given him, and then give Him nothing back in return but his wasted life.

God wants boys' *lives*, not only

their souls. It is for active service soldiers are drilled and trained and fed and armed. That is why you and I are in the world at all—not to prepare to go out of it some day; but to serve God actively in it *now*. It is monstrous and shameful and cowardly to talk of seeking the kingdom *last*. It is shirking duty, abandoning one's rightful post, playing into the enemy's hand by doing nothing to turn his flank. Every hour a *Kingdom* is coming in your heart, in your home, in the world near you, be it a kingdom of darkness or a kingdom of light. You are placed where you are, in a particular business, in a particular street, to help on there the kingdom of God. You cannot do that when you are old and ready to die. By that time your companions will have fought their fight, and lost or won. If they lose, will you not be

sorry that you did not help them? Will you not regret that only at the last you helped the kingdom of God? Perhaps you will not be able to do it then. And then your life has been lost indeed.

Very few people have the opportunity to seek the kingdom of God at the end. Christ, knowing all that, knowing that religion was a thing for our life, not merely for our death-bed, has laid this command upon us now: "Seek *first* the kingdom of God." I am going to leave you with this text itself. Every Brigade boy in the world should obey it.

Boys, before you go to work tomorrow, before you go to sleep tonight, before you go to the Sunday-school this afternoon, before you go out of the door of the City Hall, resolve that, God helping you, you are going to seek *first* the kingdom of

God. Perhaps some boys here are deserters; they began once before to serve Christ, and they deserted. Come back again, come back again to-day. Others have never enlisted at all. Will you not do it now? You are old enough to decide. And the grandest moment of a boy's life is that moment when he decides to

Seek first the kingdom of God.

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BY

HENRY DRUMMOND

AUTHOR OF “GREATEST THING IN THE WORLD,” ETC.

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